

QUESTION RE TAKING A PLEDGE
by Willis E. Bishop
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Deut. 24:6: The passage regarding the question reads in the King James, "No man shall take the lower [or the nether] or the upper millstone to pledge, for he taketh a man's life to pledge." The little key to that is the word "pledge". For example, look down in verse 10: "When thou dost lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge. In any case, thou shalt deliver the pledge again when the sun goeth down that he may sleep in his own raiment [which is his pledge] and bless thee, and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God."

In other words, if someone borrowed something, you might expect that he would give you something to keep until he returns that which he has borrowed. In the latter case here, the fellow was poor and all he had to give was his coat, or what he slept in. And so the Scripture says, "Now don't keep that overnight because he needs that to sleep in." That's the idea back up here in verse 6, "No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone to pledge, for he taketh a man's life [or living] to pledge."

Now, you folks are not old enough to remember that they used to grind things by using millstones. A fellow comes to borrow something from you, so you take one of his millstones as a pledge. This says you shouldn't do that because he needs that to grind and to have some food to eat, so don't take that upper or lower millstone for a pledge. The fact is that the word "lower" or "nether" is in what's called the dual form in the Hebrew (there are two stones that rub together), or don't take just the upper one. When you do that, you've taken away something that keeps him from grinding and living, so don't do that. I think that's all that needs to be said concerning that.

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